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'A Small-Town Man'

BY GEORGE E. JAQUES

And Nathaniel said unto him, Can any good things come out of Nazareth? John 1:46.

IT is strange how some ideas that are wrong, or only partially true, persist from generation to generation. The idea expressed by the contemporaries of Jesus regarding his possibilities we still hold in a large measure today. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth"—or Podunk? Witness, for example, the fact that the World Missionary Conference held at Tambaram, India, was called by the name of a near-by city, the Madras Conference. No one knows but that the conference was actually held in Madras. The truth is that it was held in the small neighboring village of Tambaram.

A favorite pastime of theologians is imagining what Jesus would do if he were to come to this earth today. Two statements can be made quite dogmatically regarding what would happen if Jesus were to come. The first is that those who were looking for his coming would not know where to find him. Like the wise men coming from the East at his birth, they would go to Herod's palace looking for him. Like Nathaniel, they would hold prejudice against the place of his coming. And second, those who were familiar with him as a boy would not recognize his greatness. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus returned to Nazareth, his own country, and when the Sabbath was come he began to teach in the synagogue. He made a deep impression; many hearing him were astonished. But their astonishment was prejudiced. They asked some questions: "Whence hath this man these things?" "And what is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon, and are not his sisters with us? And they were offended in him."

Just so today, anyone aspiring to greatness will prob-

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ably face these forms of unbelief and skepticism which Jesus had to face as he started out on his ministry.

WHERE HUMILITY IS OUT OF PLACE

The thing, however, that is of the utmost significance is that the individual himself shall not lose faith in himself because of his humble background, because his parents are poor, because he was born in a lowly place instead of a mansion, because he had to grow up in a small town and go to a small-town school, and because he had to work with his hands doing menial chores. I suspect that the question which Nathaniel asked of Philip concerning Jesus, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" is one we are likely to ask of ourselves. All of us have those stirrings of soul and imagination as we visualize some great task that needs to be done. Our ambition is on fire to have a share in it, and then we stop and reckon on the difficulties which arise. No matter what the difficulties in the way, invariably our attention is diverted from them to the question of our ability. Did anyone with our background ever do anything like this? It all comes down to this question, "Can any good thing come out of our town, or our family?"

Humility is a Christian virtue, and reverence for the past is wisdom, but when it happens that the past becomes as a millstone about the neck of the present and future, humility ceases to be a virtue and we had better dispense with the past!

How strangely we reason or rationalize when we are burdened with an inferiority complex! Either we say that there were heroes who were giants in olden days and we cannot expect any today, or else we say that with our background, which had no heroes in it, we cannot expect any better today.

Nathaniel's question to Philip concerning Jesus may not have been prompted by an inferiority complex, but if he had been living in Nazareth himself, he might well have had such a complex. It may be that he considered himself a realist. To us he seems a skeptic and a cynic, but the important point is that whatever the cause, his unbelief threatened to halt Jesus on his way to becoming the Messiah. No greater harm can possibly be done to an individual or a cause than to discount them with cynical remarks such as that of Nathaniel. Very often the sons and daughters of immigrants suffer keenly from such remarks. The children who play with them are aware of their own national history but forget that those who come of a different cultural background may have as much to be proud of as those whose families have lived in this country many years. We also do violence to the attempts of an individual to raise himself above the level of poor or degenerate stock when we refuse to believe that any good thing can come out of his family.

TODAY'S OBSESSION FOR THE CITY

This text, however, has to do more specifically with the limitations of an insignificant village. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" We still raise the question, believing that in a small town we are limited in possibilities and opportunities. Young people become obsessed with the thought that New York—or perhaps Hollywood—is the only place where they can have a chance to make good.

Vermont is one of the distinctively rural states of our country, yet in proportion to its population it has more names in Who's Who than any other state. However, the idea is prevalent that if you want to get into Who's Who, you must leave Vermont, and Calvin Coolidge is cited as an illustration. The implication is that it is a good thing to grow up in the country but you must go to the city if you want to become great or do something important. Even looking at Jesus, we must admit that he left Nazareth as he started out on his ministry. After having said this, we must go on to say that we are being misled by a partial truth.

It is not true that you must go away from the country or the village to become a success.

Emerson, the sage of Concord, is said to have remarked: "If you make a finer mousetrap than anyone else [that is, the most insignificant article you can think of], but you make it better than anyone else, even though you build your house in the midst of the woods, the world will beat a path to your door." Here is the truth upon which young people in our country and village communities need to be nurtured.

WHAT IS GENUINE SUCCESS?

It is true that if you want to achieve fame on Broadway or in Hollywood, if you want to make large sums of money, become a leader in politics, you must leave the farm; or at least your chances are better if you leave. But if you go to Hollywood will the world become better, and will your memory be blessed fifty years from now? You can go to New York and become engaged in commerce on the stock exchange. You may make much money, or you may fall by the wayside. If you stay on the farm, you are not likely to want for food, you are not likely to grow rich, but you can be making a life. If you stay in the small community your chances of doing good and serving mankind are just as great as in the city. How we need today boys and girls who are ready to devote their lives to the country community! Jesus left Nazareth, that is true, but he did not go to the city or to the far country. Though his last week was spent in Jerusalem, his active ministry was spent mostly in Galilee and Perea, and he repeatedly withdrew with his disciples to isolated places.

There is a truth in the idea that you must leave the country to go to the city. It is this: you may still stay on the farm, but you must not be provincial, limited in your horizons. You must strike your roots deep in the soil of the community in which you live, but your branches must extend beyond the boundaries of the town. To that extent Jesus was not, and never can be, labeled "a small-town man." To this extent "small-town" is not a complimentary adjective when applied to label a person's mind. The ideal for which we must ever strive as Christians is to be world-minded citizens.

Nathaniel's question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" suggests one important thought. It is connected with the word "thing." The best "thing"

that can come out of a community—or to put it in other words, the best contribution that can be made to the world—is through a man, or a human personality. Communities may boast of certain inventions having originated within their boundaries, but it is a fact that always back of an invention and greater than it is the personality that has conceived it. We live in a machine age today, and we are dependent on our pet gadgets; without them life becomes impossible.

Malcolm Dana in his fine little book, *Christ of the Countryside,* has reminded us that the boyhood home of Jesus was more simple and probably had fewer comforts than the humblest farm homes of today. Pos-

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sibly Jesus' home was constructed of mortar or stone. It had, however, no window, only a doorway; its floor was made of earth, the roof of boughs with clay and straw. In good weather the family slept on the roof, each wrapped in his blanket; and yet from such a simple peasant home there came a personality which changed the world and which is still capable of making a greater contribution to the world than all the inventions that have been made in the past or can be made in the future.

What the world is waiting for is not a miraculous way of transporting people in safety a thousand miles an hour at little cost. Our need is not for a marvelous scientific discovery to cure cancer and all other ills of mankind. Our need is not for more gadgets so that we shall have no work to do—only press a few buttons to start things going. The world is sick today, it is in dire need of medicine to cure its ills, but legislation alone will never cure them. The greatest need of the world today is for men and women who will live their lives humbly and quietly with such high ideals, such courage and nobility, that their influence, like that of the humble Carpenter of Nazareth, shall go out into the uttermost parts of the earth.

LITTLE TOWNS THAT ARE GREAT

Amherst, Massachusetts, is a small town. It typifies all that can be said of a small town. Herbert B. Adams tells how for years, in town meeting, the villagers struggled to secure some system of sewerage for "the center," but the "ends of the town" always voted "no!" On one occasion a leading villager, in an effort to allay suspicion of extravagance, made a motion that whatever system of sewerage were adopted, the surface water and rainfall should be allowed to take their natural course down hill in the ordinary gutters. The farmers, however, became suspicious and voted an overwhelming "no!" "Accordingly, by the local law of Amherst," says Professor Adams, "water had to run uphill until the next town meeting." We laugh at this and say it is typically "small-town"; and yet, in that same small town Emily Dickinson was born in 1830 and died there. She lived in retirement, known but to a few intimate friends. Only one of her poems was published in her lifetime. It was not until four years after her death that a volume of her poems was published. Emily Dickinson is still rather inconspicuous, and yet her name will last long after other famous names have gone. E. Merrill Root says of her: "The town Amherst is changed by the fact of her life as Domrémy was changed by the life of Jeanne d'Arc, or Jerusalem by the passion of Jesus."

In conclusion, I can do no better than to recall to our minds Hawthorne's story of "The Great Stone Face." The life of the village was centered about the hope that a great man, resembling the great stone face of the mountain, would come to them. The people hailed in turn a financier, a great soldier, a great statesman; but by and by their blindness was removed and they came to learn that right in their own midst lived Ernest, who was the looked-for prophet.

So it shall be for you and me as it was with Jesus, if we have in us true greatness; no matter where we are, nor what we do, nor where we come from, nothing can prevent us from some day making our contribution to the world's weal.

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The answer lies within ourselves.

Good-Night

NOT without practice do we die,
But every night, with trustful sigh,
We close out sights and sounds—let go—
And in a moment, nothing know.

We might dread death, if it were strange,
But we have slept; so without change,
We can let go, and buried deep,
Unwaking, through the aeons, sleep.

BERNARD C. CLAUSEN.

God Is Like a Mountain

By Frank P. Fletcher

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about his people from this time forth and forevermore. Psalm 125:2.

GOD and mountains have much in common. The ancient Hebrews were keenly aware of the fact. To them God had the qualities of a mountain. To think thus of him was for them easy and natural, because God like the mountains, and the mountains like God, played so large and so similar a part in their history and in their daily lives. "As the mountains, so Jehovah," they said. We have cause, this midsummer morning when all out-of-doors is so enchanting, to rejoice that we like our ancient brethren are surrounded on every side by the beauty of hills and the grandeur of mountains. It should be easy for us also to think of him in whose glad worship we are met as a God like unto a mountain.

I

As the mountains in their nearness and reality, so Jehovah. The land of the Hebrews was one of hills and mountains. They were to be found almost everywhere. One had but to lift up one's eyes, and there they stood. There was no doubting the evidence. They were not illusion: they were real. One could climb their rugged sides even as Jesus often climbed, stand on their wind-swept peaks and feel their very substance beneath one's feet. Clouds might indeed at times cap their summits; fog might shut them from view, or blinding storms engulf them; the mantle of the night was sure to be thrown about them. But they were still there. And when the clouds were lifted, or the storm had subsided, or morning came, they stood revealed, as real and as near as ever. One could be sure of the mountains. Even the blind beggar by the city gate never doubted them. The Hebrew captive in a foreign land could vision them in his dreams and hear them call his name. So real and so near to his people was—and is—God. This blessed fact the mountains were and are ever telling. Moses once tended the flocks of his father-in-law in desert solitudes under the shadow of Horeb, Mount of God. There Jehovah met him and gave him his life's commission. And of himself Jehovah said: "I Am That I Am. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you." Reality—I Am. Is not God just as real now—the same yesterday, today and forever?

Early in my ministry, for a few months I supplied the pulpit in a tiny community nestled among the foothills of the White mountains. One day I accepted an invitation to dine in a summer home. Almost immediately my attention was attracted to what appeared to be a picture hanging on a wall, one of the most charming and most natural landscape views I had ever seen—trees dissolving into a background of forest which climbed a steep hillside into the sky. As I looked with more searching glance I discovered that what I had thought to be a picture was not the work of man but of the divine artist. The picture frame was a window casing through which I was looking at reality itself. So is God reality. He is not far off, but One very nigh unto all those who in truth seek him.

> Speak to Him thou: for He hears,
> And Spirit with spirit may meet:
> Closer is He than breathing,
> And nearer than hands or feet.

In the sense of their reality and nearness, as the mountains so God.

II

As the mountains in their greatness, their beauty, their glory, so Jehovah. It was while standing beside a mountain that one heard the voice which said: "Take thy shoes from off thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Not alone was awe-inspiring Sinai before him, but all around him was the glory of Jehovah, and the one was in harmony with the other. What man of us has not stood uncovered in the presence of a lofty mountain? There was that in its sublimity and greatness which associated itself with the sublimity and greatness of God. No wonder the psalmist declared, "Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God."

We also, lifting up our eyes unto the hills, are reminded of him from whom our help comes. For his greatness the heaven of heavens cannot contain, and his glory is far above that of the earth and the sea. He is the One "altogether lovely," and his is the name that is above every name. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Not often, perhaps rarely, is this prayer answered in the case of man.

But how often is loveliness as of God himself set in the face of a mountain! Mountains half cloud-hidden or dimly outlined against a hazy sky; mountains cut crystal and clear against the infinite blue; mountains lifting solemn heads out of the witchery of autumn colors, or it may be from the exquisitely delicate and ever changing hues of spring; mountains clad in the whiteness of winter, itself at times by favored sunsets burned into rapturous tints of pink and lavender and purple; mountains by moon and stars overwatched as they take their granite sleep; mountains ever sharing with the heavens, their neighbors, in telling the beauty as well as the glory of their Creator. In their glory and beauty and greatness, as the mountains so God.

III

As the mountains in their protection and safety, so Jehovah. The history of the Children of Israel was one of almost constant warfare, even from the time of their conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua to the last desperate and tragic stand of the depleted band of Zealots against Rome in the year 70 A.D. Sometimes they were the aggressors, but often the battle went against them and they were forced into hiding or vassalage. In which latter case times well-nigh innumerable they found refuge and safety in the caves and fastnesses of their native mountains. David's ex-

periences in so hiding from the jealous frenzy of King Saul form a classic example.

"The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rock," observed the writer of Proverbs. And therein he drew a picture of the weakness and the strength of his own people. It was wisdom in a weak people to have a strong place of refuge. As there was safety in the rock for the conies, as there was protection for the Hebrews in their mountains, so Jehovah was a rock of refuge for his people.

The psalmist speaks: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." His testimony is duplicated again and again upon the lips of his fellow men. Christ stands as "the shadow of a great rock" in the "weary land" of our world today. Human need, deep and desperate, is everywhere. Happy that individual, that nation, that world which finds its refuge, safe and sure, in God. In their safety and protection, as the mountains so God.

IV

As the mountains in their steadfastness and eternity, so Jehovah. "They that trust in Jehovah are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth forever." Even such steadfastness inheres not in men themselves, but only as they put their trust in the eternal God. Man is like the grass of the field and the flower by the wayside. "He spends his years as a tale that is told." Not so, God. "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." His years change not. Him we liken unto the eternal hills and to the mountains everlasting. Generation after generation of mankind, countless in number, has the Old Man of the Mountains with steady and changeless gaze watched as they have come and gone; and shall watch others follow.

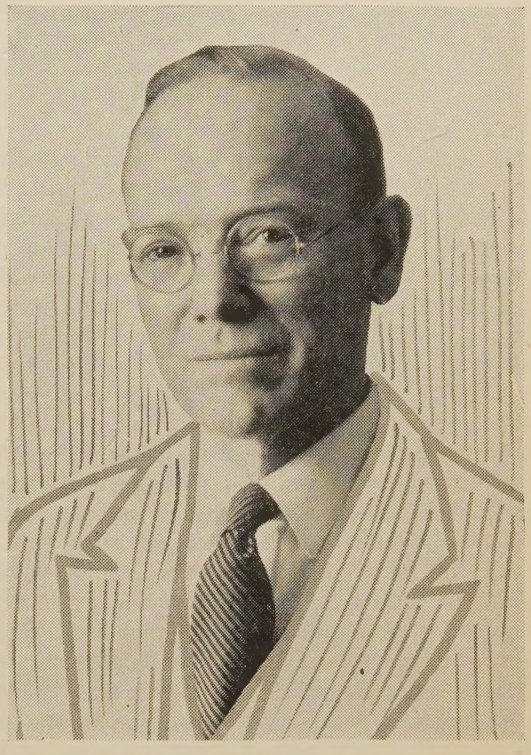
Yet even the mountains fail to tell the true story of God's changelessness. For unnoticed by us, they change. Professor Gould of the Byrd Antarctic Expedition reports the discovery almost at the pole of a mighty mountain range yielding coal and fossils, bearing thus unmistakable testimony to the existence of a day when climatic and topographical conditions in that land of the midnight sun were very different from now. Change! But

> Before the hills in order stood
> Or earth received her frame,
> From everlasting Thou art God,
> To endless years the same.

In their eternity and steadfastness, and infinitely beyond, as the mountains so God.

V

As the mountains in their challenge to higher levels, so Jehovah. They are among God's signboards, ever pointing and urging men upward. Who of us standing at the foot of a lofty peak or range has not felt his soul stirred and has not heard the challenge of the climb? Well worn trails over all the principal ranges in this fair vacation-land bear witness to the potency of that challenge. The same evidence in varying degrees is to be found elsewhere in our own and other lands and climes—in fact almost wherever mountains and men dwell together. A recent count of about sixty fellow climbers met or seen in one day on the trails of the Presidential Range, is indicative. The fire warden at the summit of another mountain, having the advantage of a degree of isolation from its fellows, told us late in the afternoon that about four hundred climbers had already visited the summit that day—"a small day," he dryly observed. Evidence more impressive still, and tragic, is to be found in occasional markers by the trail-side telling of those who sacrificed life itself in their climb.



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By the record, what a large part mountains played in the life of him who was and is both Son of Man and Son of God! What a framework for his life and ministry they afford—Mount Zion, the Mount of Temptation, the Mount of Beatitudes, the Mount of Transfiguration, Olivet, Calvary, the Mount of Ascension. So closely in the minds of the ancients were mountains associated with the higher levels of life that they often had their sacred mountain, which they believed to be the dwelling-place of their god or gods. Thus notably in heathen mythology, Mount Olympus; to the Hebrews, Horeb or Sinai; and above all others, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," Mount Zion. What the psalmist says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills," is only another way of saying, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the Lord."

In my study hangs a picture of three climbers on the shoulder of a range looking out across a valley to a peak in the distance, to which one of the three is point-

ing and which is beckoning them on. In these days of ever lowering religious and moral standards, when our soul-forgetting world so desperately needs those who will be leaders upward rather than followers downward, every home should contain some such picture to remind its inmates that there are higher levels than those on which we are accustomed to live. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," argued St. Paul. They who prize divine companionship will accustom themselves to walk life's higher levels, for so shall they find themselves keeping step with him.

"God of the upward way, my Guide Divine,
Where Thou hast set Thy feet, let me plant mine."

In their challenge to higher levels, as the mountains so God.

VI

As the mountains in the love they inspire in others, so Jehovah. To be sure, mountains do not themselves love; neither do they hate. If, for instance, one tried to find in the visage of the Old Man of the Mountains marks of our Lord, they would not be those of the God Shepherd, nor of the Great Physician, nor of the Friend of little children, nor of the Savior of the world. If we found them at all, most fittingly they would be the stern features of the Judging Christ. One hardly finds love there. But this the mountains do—they inspire love for themselves in us. Even so there is that in God which calls forth our love for him. Not that all men love God, not that all men love the mountains. Some hearts are strangely unresponsive to the one or to both—which is the fault neither of the mountains nor of God. If one loves mountains how can one keep from loving God? Love for his creation must needs lead, it would seem, to love for its Creator. We love the mountains even though they do not and cannot reciprocate. "We love him because he first loved us." He himself is love. A little child once discovered that her love for mother was different from and greater than that for her beloved doll. Why? Because her love for "dollie" was all one way, but mother loved her back. Somewhat like the little girl her doll, do we older children love the mountains. But our Heavenly Father loves us back, with a love everlasting and beyond all telling. In, and infinitely beyond, the love they inspire in us, as the mountains so God.

VII

And so because of his nearness and reality, because of his greatness and beauty and glory, because of the protection and safety he affords, because of his steadfastness and eternity, because of his challenge to life's higher levels, because of the love he inspires in us, we may rejoice to find with the psalmist that ours is a God like a mountain. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem—so Jehovah is round about his people, from this time forth and forevermore."

And because he is like unto a mountain, shall not we who worship him also be like unto the everlasting hills?

Altar and Threshing Floor

By Ray F. Magnuson

Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite. II Samuel 24:18.

THE story that forms the basis for our sermon theme is one that comes out of the final months of David's reign. Like most Old Testament stories, it is told with Oriental simplicity and charm. While the story has historical value, it was not recorded primarily to give the reader authenticated history. We Americans are apt to become so literal-minded as we read the Bible that we miss the deep purpose of biblical narratives. Their purpose is to reveal a principle or teach a lesson. The recorder of these narratives usually has a philosophical or a religious bias. Turn to the American history books used in our schoolrooms of the generation past. They have historical value, but with a bias in favor of us who are Americans. There is a difference between the American history books used in Nebraska and those used in Oklahoma. In Nebraska, children learn that Jefferson Davis was a rebel, but in Oklahoma children learn to rank him in greatness with Abraham Lincoln.

One must always read the Bible history with the idea that, honest as biblical writers tried to be, there was invariably a certain bias in favor of certain institutions or certain people, and of a certain Jehovah God. These men were not historians; they were proclaimers of a certain point of view. They were advocates of a certain set of principles. If they used a story, it was to point out the invariable results of certain acts, which were illustrations of the working of God's moral laws.

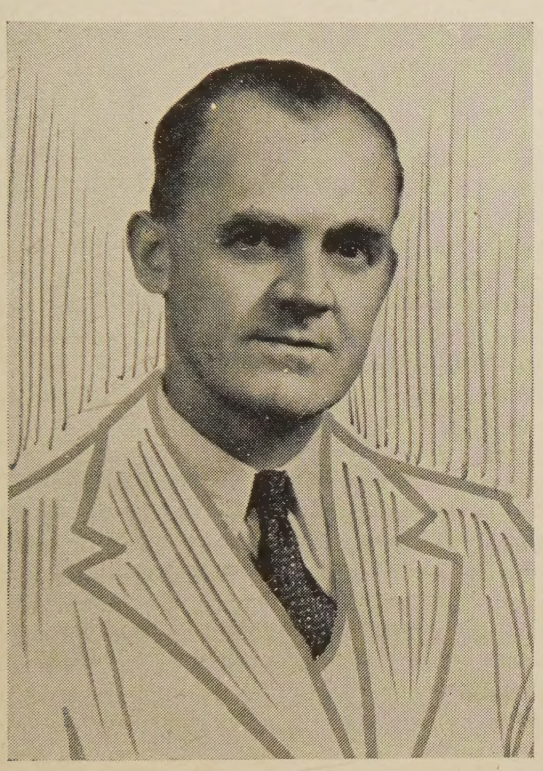
Now, we are not sorry that these ancient writers wrote as they did. But where we often err is at the point of expecting Bible stories to be treatises in ancient history. We expect every statement made about a certain incident to match perfectly with some other statement by a different writer. If they do not match, we think it is our solemn duty to devise some ingenious scheme which will harmonize the apparent conflict. If we were wise, we would accept Bible stories for what they were intended to be, namely, oral methods for teaching certain great truths about life. This would not mean that we would minimize their historical significance. But our emphasis would be on the underlying principle taught and on its application. When we unimaginatively accept Bible stories as literally true, without catching the principle the writer intended to teach, we have failed to use the Bible as we should.

A MILITARY CENSUS

And now—the story. David had come to the close of his reign. In the first verse of the twenty-fourth chapter, the writer of II Samuel says: "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." Why the Lord should take his spite out

on the people by ordering a census is not very clear. Over in I Chronicles, the twenty-first chapter and the first verse, we read about this same incident, but that writer says, "Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel." We could, if we were so minded, have a nice debate as to which one really instigated the business. Did God or Satan prompt David to hold a census? Possibly David, like some of us, may have been in touch with both parties! Or perchance this was once when the Democrats and the Republicans agreed. At any rate, the census was taken.

But note the kind of census. It was a military census. One might go further and say that it was more



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than a census; it was a mobilization. Men were called into convenient towns over the area. They were probably given some instruction in the art of war. This process took about nine months. When the mobilization was complete, David felt concerned about what he had done. He felt he had sinned in mobilizing his army. Would to God military leaders of 1939 might catch something of David's penitent spirit! When Gad, the prophet of God, heard that David was penitent about the census, he came and offered David the choice of three calamities or misfortunes which would come as punishment for his sin.

David could choose seven years of famine; or he could have three months of disastrous war with his enemies; or he could have a pestilence which would last three days. David chose the pestilence—or at least that is what the writer says. His view was that God sent it on David's request. I do not believe it. I do not for one minute accept the anti-Christian idea that God deliberately sends famine or pestilence upon any people. Jesus refuted that idea a few years later. But I have no doubt that the pestilence came and that the people of that time interpreted that fact as punishment for sin. As a matter of historical fact, disease has usually broken out when there has been military mobilization. And, despite all the advance of medical science, it will probably break out again. Whenever the scattered diseases of a large area are concentrated into the mobilization area, these diseases are quickly and easily transmitted. Moreover, sanitation becomes a more difficult problem. So there has always followed the pestilence.

No wonder David was sorry. His people were dying like flies. And so he prayed: "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done?" It was the old, old story. The innocent suffer in every war. Witness the suffering of innocent women and children in the warring areas of the world today. No wonder David prayed that the pestilence might come to an end. In answer to his prayer came Gad, the prophet, with a suggestion that he go to the farm of Araunah, the Jebusite, and there buy a threshing floor upon which to build an altar, where he could offer fruits worthy of repentance. This farm of Araunah was in an area that had not yet been touched by the pestilence. It was upon this spot that the temple of Solomon later came to be built. But as yet it was only a farmer's threshing floor—a place where the angel of death had not yet visited. There was no wailing or mourning there. It was a haven of prosperity.

AMERICA MUST BUILD ALTARS

It may be a bit dangerous to make far-fetched parabolic connections from Bible stories to present events, but one cannot resist the temptation to suggest that the area of Araunah the Jebusite bore to Israel something of the same relationship that our country bears to the world. The peoples of the world, innocent people, have been caught in the maelstrom of war and pestilence and tyranny. So far, we of America have miraculously escaped this lengthening shadow of hopeless despair and tragedy. Can it be that upon the American soil must be built the altars upon which the peoples of the world may lay their tokens of repentance to the God of love? May it not be that America has a true sacrifical role to play in world affairs? Dare we hope that out of a redeemed America may come the redemption of the world? Will America be conscious of her opportunity to play the part of a New Jerusalem where real democracy and real justice and real cooperation shall triumph? We pray that this may be so, not just for America's sake, but for the sake of the whole world.

We are not at all sure that America is moving in the direction of saviorhood. She seems to be trying strenuously to save herself, without much concern for other nations. Some people's idea of saving America is to save her with all of her selfishness. But it is this selfishness which will destroy her. There is only one reason why in America one-third of the people are ill-fed, ill-clad and ill-housed—an insane desire on the part of some to hold and control more of this nation's goods than they need. And while we have more total wealth than any other nation in the world and more

wealth per capita, our distribution of this wealth is shameful. But if, through democratic processes, we can solve that problem, then the altars of the world may well be built in America.

RELIGION MUST HAVE SOCIAL OUTLOOK

But we must go on with our story. When David came to the farm of Araunah, he asked if he might purchase the threshing floor for the altar. Araunah was very generous. "Certainly you may have it, and without cost. And you may have my oxen and my threshing instruments and the yokes so that a fire may be built, and the animal sacrifice consumed." Araunah was the true patriot, holding back nothing from his sovereign. Memories of World War days! While industrial America profiteered, the American farmer allowed his products to be limited in price and kept putting in larger crops; he broke up the fertile prairies that later became the dust-bowls of the nation. And great has been the condemnation that has fallen on his head for his wickedness! But David said to Araunah: "I cannot accept this as a gift. I will not offer sacrifices to God which cost me nothing." What a sermon on stewardship in that short statement! And so David paid him for the threshing floor, and the altar was established.

As we take a panoramic view of this story, again remembering that the writer had something to teach beyond historical facts, we are justified in looking between the lines to discover the narrative's teaching values.

First, we see a king on his knees, an individual making a personal repentance in behalf of a larger group. David in prayer for his people is the answer to this perennial question of social and individual religion. Here was a king on his knees, driven there by the needs of his own people. He was on his knees for his own sins, of course. But those sinse were social sins, involving suffering laid upon innocent people. Nothing less than a social religion could suffice for that kind of sin. As a matter of fact, there can be no personal religion removed from social implications. Personality itself is partly social. One comes to the highest in personal religion only as he considers great social needs and prays and works that these needs may be satisfied. I am skeptical about any man's religion that has no social outlook. That kind of religion is not high religion. It is opium which keeps us from seeing the facts as they really are. High religion is illustrated in a king who goes down on his knees as he sees a people in great need.

RELIGION FIRST!

In the second place, there is something significant about building an altar on a threshing floor. There may have been some very practical reasons involved. Possibly the floor was on a level spot. There may have been solid rock beneath. It may have been located on a hill where such an altar could be seen for miles around. But I think there is something else involved. Surely this story beautifully illustrates the close relation of religion to the everyday life. The altar was built on the threshing floor. High religion does have something to do with the economic life of any people.

One cannot read the history of the great agrarian movements of this and other countries without becoming convinced that these movements are built on spiritual foundations. One reads about the great Dane, Bishop Grundtvig, and his folk schools which gave impetus to the great cooperative movement of Denmark, and sees in it the dramatizing of this great principle—that of building an altar upon the threshing floor. One hears with interest the results of a modern experiment on a cooperative farm in Mississippi where a former missionary and a well known Christian youth leader contrive to build an altar on a threshing floor. Closely associated with this enterprise is a great inventor who is determined that his invention shall be a social asset instead of a liability. He is determined that there shall be an altar on the threshing floor. These are inspiring examples that may throw a beam of light ahead for a perplexed rural America. So far, there do not seem to be any great stirrings in the direction of a rural altar-economics. Even the great farm cooperatives have been content to regard these economic techniques as aids to group profit-taking. However, who knows but what there may soon be a great spiritual awakening that will change this. And where should this spiritual awakening begin if not in the revitalized rural church? What a challenge!

ALL LIFE A STEWARDSHIP

Generally speaking, we people of the country can be divided into three groups on this question of altar and threshing floor. There are those among us who are interested only in the threshing floor. They have no time for an altar of any kind. To them the only important thing in life is material gain. They are the out-and-out materialists. They rather brazenly insist that the only goal worth striving for is that which can be spelled out in full granaries and healthy bank accounts. And because they think that way, they have a suspicion that almost everyone else is like them.

The second group believes just as strongly in the value of the threshing floor as the first group, but they want also an altar. *But they do not want it on the threshing floor.* Rather, they want their altar built up among the bowers of the forest, where flowers blossom and birds sing. They do not want their altars with the grime and dust of the threshing floor. They do not want to mix religion and economics at all, except to keep people honest in paying their debts. The first group, looking at this second group with altars removed from their threshing floors, see little difference between them. In fact, they call them hypocrites! I think Jesus would too.

But there is a third group: that group which has built an altar on the threshing floor. And everything that happens on the threshing floor must conform in motive and purpose to the spirit of the altar. Labor becomes a sacrament unto God. All life becomes a stewardship. Self-interest becomes subordinate to the interest of the people of one's neighborhood and nation. All this means the taking of God as one's major partner

in his business, and the lifting up to God of every transaction and every task in order that it may be harmonious with his will and purpose.

It would be presumptuous to draw the ethical blueprints of all that altar-economics would involve. Trying to be a Christian farmer in a pagan society built on the profit motive is not easy. One man said that it is impossible. But we must not take too short a view. A farmer may be compelled to restrict production while the lower one-third of the population goes hungry; but a Christian farmer must always regard such practices as temporary devices to be endured until the deeper causes of mal-distribution are corrected. Christian farmers must try to change such a system. This will not be done by changing political party loyalties every four years. That may or may not be desirable. But constructive changes can come only when farm people in small groups and in large farm organizations, inspired by high religion, begin to work out the patterns of a cooperative society. And who knows but that such a rural society might not be far from the Kingdom?

In the meantime, until such a society is fully born, farmers who are Christian can do much to alleviate the evils in the countryside. First, a farmer can refuse to be a grabber. Second, he can be a good neighbor, exemplifying the spirit of the second mile in his community relationships. Third, he can have a daily altar on his farm, where in penitence and prayer he may lift up to God the needs of his neighbors in distress, and offer himself upon that altar in service and sacrifice. Thus he can build, by a daily offering of himself unto God, an altar on his own threshing floor, the fragrance from which will be as the fragrance of new-mown clover blossoms that rise heavenward.

Earth's Goodness

By LeRoy P. Burney

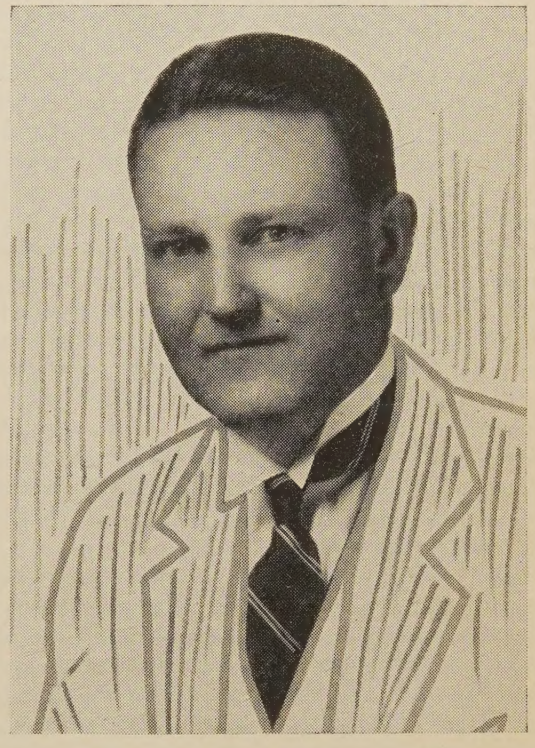
The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Psalm 33:5.

A FEW years ago Pearl Buck, then a missionary to China, gave to the world a book entitled *The Good Earth.* Within its pages people struggled, lived and loved with dependence upon the soil, from which they came, for the realization of life's aspirations. Echoes from this book have since been heard around the world and in 1938 Mrs. Buck was awarded the Nobel prize for literary achievement. Herein lies an analogy: Earth's goodness is universal and through the Good Earth the unseen Benefactor is constantly and continually awarding prizes to all those who sincerely and intelligently seek to achieve. Certainly the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

EARTH AND ITS SOIL ARE GOOD

The earth is one of the nine planets which move and have their being in an ordered and orderly universe. For us the earth is more significant than any other body. We have a knowledge of its nature, a fair understanding of its laws and a dependence upon its beneficence. So far as we know, the earth is the only planet which produces and sustains life and is inhabited by man. This realized, the earth for man becomes the superior planet, and believing that it is determined by a power greater than mechanistic, we join the psalmist in exclaiming: "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

The psalmist has experienced the goodness of the Lord—this goodness he calls mercy. Through this mercy he enjoyed life, physical and spiritual. The green pastures, the ripening harvest and the fruiting vineyard



LeRoy P. Burney

to him were evidences of the mercy of God. The lamb from the flock which provided the offering before the temple was a gift from God. The peace of the forgiven heart, the joy of the singing soul and the redemption of the enslaved life the Hebrew possessed through the mercy of God. To him the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

There are those who draw back from the very touch of earth and are slow to believe that there is any goodness in common soil. To these we read from the Scripture: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . God called the dry land earth. . . . And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind. . . . And it was so . . . and God saw that it was good." God himself considered that the soil was good, for within it he placed the fundamental principle of life and by his creative example made ordinary soil sacred to man in that man's formation was from the dust of the earth. "The Lord God formed man of the

dust of the ground." Thus man becomes a child of the soil even from the beginning and he who disdains the soil is in a measure lacking harmony with the Infinite Spirit.

Man found the earth, as his home, a Good Earth. His eyes rested first upon scenes of indescribable beauty: verdant trees loaded with luscious fruits encircled him; the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, the two trees of man's eternal quest, gave the shade of their leaves to him. The myriad songs of birds gave music to his heart. Gurgling waters passing over beds of gold and precious stones charmed his fancy and incited his productive imagination. Man, as well as God, saw that it was good.

NEW GIFTS FOR CHANGING AGES

The soil is good in its response to the needs of man even when these needs are changing with every generation. From the beginning until now man has depended upon the soil and never yet has it failed to respond to his need for food regardless of the variety or the abundance expected.

In 1798 Thomas Malthus, an English economist, wrote an "Essay on the Principles of Population" in which he expressed the fear that within a short period the earth could not possibly produce a sufficient subsistence for its population. Considerable growth of population has occurred since the days of Malthus, who died in 1834, yet the earth has not failed, but rather challenged with its overproduction, and today the soil produces varieties of vegetable life neither heard nor dreamed of in the eighteenth century by Malthus. Truly the soil is good.

Often the earth reveals the secrets of the soil to meet some particular need of man and in its revelation new goodness is evident. As civilization advanced, man became aware of the inadequacy of the materials available on the surface of the earth to meet the demands of his increasing needs. He was prompted to penetrate the depths of the soil and there found awaiting him undreamed of storehouses of coal, ore and minerals deposited through the ages and now ready for man's intelligent utilization. Additional years pass; again man calls to the heart of Mother Earth and she answers with a present of vast supplies of oil and gas to meet the need of man with his machines. The use of this gift has virtually changed the way of life for man. Greater secrets than these, no doubt, are held by the Good Earth to be revealed when the need is acute and when man is intelligent enough to be trusted.

The soil is good in its gift of beauty to man. Rolling seas, sweeping plains and majestic mountains all reveal the beauty of the Lord our God and present pictures to which man's heart responds in deep reverence and praise. Man feasts with his eyes upon the first violet of winter's ebb; but more than this, within his heart he realizes the nearness of the eternal Creator. The Master himself recognized the goodness of the soil in producing beauty when he plucked the lily with flaming petals and exclaimed: "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The need for beauty, even as the need for God, inheres in the human heart. Finding the one we find the other, even as Bliss Carman's poem "Vestigia" teaches:

> I took a day to search for God,
> And found him not. But as I trod
> By rocky ledge, through woods untamed,
> Just where one scarlet lily flamed,
> I saw his footprint in the sod.

THE GOOD EARTH AND THE GOOD LIFE

Today one hears, from public platform and in private conversation, much discussion of the "abundant life." Often a note of uncertainty is detected as to the true meaning of the term. Apparently within the mind there is conflict between the traditional conception of the abundant life as something of the future and the modern materialistic idea that life consists in the abundance of things possessed here and now. So long as these ideas continue in conflict, confusion will reign in the minds of men and no satisfying philosophy of the abundant life will develop. To man, God gives both earth and heaven, and the one is complementary rather than antagonistic to the other. However, through the ages certain schools of religious thought have presented God and his earth as opposing each other. Outstanding among these were the Gnostics who believed and taught that "God the highest intelligence dwells at an infinite distance from this world in the Abyss, removed from all connection with every work of temporal Creation." This is an extreme view, but unconsciously the influence of the attendant teaching, that matter is antagonistic to God, remains to this day, even though Gnosticism ceased to be an active system fifteen hundred years ago. Man has been baffled and buffeted and sometimes defeated in his quest for the good life, not because he is caught in the midst of a battle between earth and heaven, but because the means to the goal are substituted for the goal itself and he becomes lost in the maze of things. If there is a person present who is blinded by the material things of earth and unable to see the heavens, we invite you this morning to hear our Master discuss the good life in relationship to the things of earth.

JESUS TELLS OF ABUNDANT LIFE

The very coming of the Christ from heaven to earth indicates the interrelation of the two realms and our Lord announced personally that his prime purpose was to assure the abundant life to dwellers upon earth. He says: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." When Jesus spoke these words he was not dealing with saints in glory but with sinners on earth, and the medium through which this life is to become real and vital is the Kingdom of God, to which, directly or by inference, Jesus related himself and all his teachings. Therefore the abundant life comes through the allegiance of the person to the King and his Kingdom. This Kingdom is thus defined by a Christian ethicist: "The Kingdom of God is the moral organization and unifying of man under the law of righteous love, written in their hearts and hallowing all the relationships of human life, brought about through the power of God's redeeming

love, revealed in Christ and applied to man's soul by the Holy Spirit."

Now Jesus speaks about the quest for the good life with these words of direction: "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." This is the first step; he who by faith, prompted by the Spirit of God, will venture this step will find the Christ and know him, whom to know aright is life eternal. But this life is not to be separate from the material world, for Jesus further speaks a promise: "All these things shall be added unto you." What then does Jesus mean by "things"? In the preceding verses of this chapter Jesus refers to food and personal comforts. He speaks of sowing and gathering into barns. He lists the everyday needs for life. The "things" are essential in the sight of the Master and must from necessity be part of the life which is abundant.

MAN AND HIS LAND

A divine covenant was given to man according to which he was to care for the land entrusted to him. This is borne out through the testimony of Scripture: "God the Eternal took man and put him in the park of Eden, to till it and to *guard* it" (Moffat). Dear Mother Earth has rewarded man's tillage with her fruit but often she turns her seared, gullied face to man and he has not responded as her guardian; for today on every hand millions of acres bear mute testimony to the unconcern of man for his land. Dr. Liberty Hyde Bailey, in his book, *The Holy Earth,* challenges man to guard his land as a trust from God. He says:

"If God created the earth, so is the earth hallowed; and if it is hallowed, so must we deal with it devotedly and with care that we do not despoil it, and mindful of our relations to all beings that live on it. We are to consider it religiously: Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

"If the earth is holy, then the things that grow out of the earth are also holy. They do not belong to man to do with them as he will. Dominion does not carry personal ownership. There are many generations of folk yet to come after us, who will have equal right with us to the products of the globe. It would seem that a divine obligation rests on every soul."

Man in accepting this stewardship becomes a *creator* with God and thus becomes a peer of the divine. The philosophy of the writer of an old Chinese poem dated 2500 B. C. is expressive of the satisfying relation a man may find through his land with himself and with the Creator. He wrote:

> When the sun rises, I go to work;
> When the sun goes down, I take my rest;
> I dig the well from which I drink;
> I farm the soil that yields my food.
> I share creation; *kings do no more.*

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

God's great loving heart was touched with the pathetic loneliness of man. In all creation there was no companionship for him. God saw and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." Knowing that he would not always be with him God gave him a companion embodying the ideals of heaven's purity and earth's loveliness. The joy of the man pleased the Lord God and he came often in those days of fellowship with his children.

To me the most beautiful word picture in the whole realm of literature is this: "The Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Here is a picture of perfect poise and sublime beauty in which is centralized the personality of the Holy God, desiring to give to man his eternal fellowship. The scene is vivid but for a moment. The figure grows dim as God turns his back and moves away, sorrowful because man has disappointed him. Ages pass. Man, broken and penitent, longs for a renewal of that fellowship. Abram in his tent door almost recovered the hope—but not yet. Isaiah almost recaptured the radiance—but not yet, not yet. The days come and go. Finally, on a joyous day, a figure comes down the path from Nazareth, across the fields of Galilee, by the flocks on the slopes down to the Jordan where out of the stillness of eternity a voice spoke, saying: "This is my beloved Son." Again God has come to man: come to walk in his gardens, come to teach him about the good life in parables of fireside and field, come to redeem from sin, come to defeat the last enemy of man, come to assure eternal life to man. Once again the picture of Eden is clear; indeed it grows in radiant light, for no longer is it evening twilight but morning's dawn. Humanity no longer hides in the evening shadows, but rushes to meet Deity in the freshness of the morning light. Again the song: "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

This goodness, however, was never intended to be appropriated selfishly but rather under the divine command to be shared with all mankind. "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

We commit ourselves to this task. We dedicate our means to this end. We consecrate our hearts and lives to make the goodness of earth and heaven available to man.

> We rest our hopes on the Eternal,
> We wait for him, our help and shield;
> In him our heart rejoices,
> Our faith is in his sacred name.
> Thy kindness rest upon us, O Eternal,
> As our hope rests in thee!

Stony Well

THIS rock rolled out of Time, with hardness on its face. . . .
Yet stone itself dissolved, worn in one dark deep well,
When water, drop by drop, continually fell,
Leaving no roughened scar that one could ever trace.
This hollow fern-hid stone is something that we know;
But like to it, when constant hammer strokes of Fate
Hollow deep space within, we can in time relate
A kind of conscious peace, welling to overflow. . . .
Still, as this still water, a quiet the heart may learn,
Bowled with the strength of granite, and frailty of fern.

CHARLOTTE NEWTON.

'Those Who Sow'

By Ralph L. Williamson

Behold, a sower went forth to sow. Matthew 13:3.

SOMEONE has suggested that while Jesus was telling the parable of the sower by the lakeside on that bright day there was a sower busily broadcasting seed in a field on the slope above. We are so far removed in time and circumstance from that far-off day that there are farm children present this morning who have never seen seed being broadcast by hand. They believe the word "broadcast" comes from radio usage,

Ralph L. Williamson

whereas it was a rural term and practice familiar to our grandfathers. Even today in most countries across the world it is a familiar springtime sight to see the man of the soil tramping over his acres with a bag hung across his shoulders into which he regularly thrusts his hand and then rhythmically flings wide in characteristic motion the seed for a new crop.

In the Master's parable we may well believe that it was good seed which was being sown. A sower has no business sowing poor seed; it must have strong vitality, be capable of germinating well, and be pure. Yet not always have farmers used good seed. How well I recall that in my youth many a slipshod farmer used poor seed and had to be trained out of such a habit by the extension service of the state agricultural college. But in Jesus' parable good seed is indicated by the abundance of yield of that which fell into good ground.

This biblical sower scattered his seed with prodigal hand. We like to believe also that he had a well prepared seed-bed with every lump pulverized; that only then he went onto the field, sowed it full, and even scattered some beyond the borders. For when broadcasting you must not be too sparing of your seed. You must be willing to waste a portion, to scatter beyond the borders, or you will later find that you do not even have the field full. So on that day in Galilee some of the sower's seed fell on the hard pathway that ran along the edge of the field, some fell into one stony corner, some fell into another corner of briers, and some fell on good ground. Therefore some of the waste seed was eaten by the birds of heaven, some sprang up quickly and then withered, some was soon choked out by thorns, and some produced thirtyfold, sixtyfold or a hundredfold.

This morning we are most interested in those who sow. Who are they?

CO-WORKERS WITH GOD

There are those men of the soil who are co-workers with the God of nature—our farmers like the man in Jesus' parable. What a glorious and important task is theirs—is yours! You are the seed-sowers and tillers of the good earth. Yours is the high privilege of sowing and tilling and reaping that the world may be fed and clothed. O that every farmer might feel the true dignity and worth of his work! To our rural-life leaders like Liberty Hyde Bailey and the late Kenyon Butterfield, to our 4-H extension leaders and agricultural teachers, to our rural press, to our rural ministers, and to our Bibles we turn to find a worthy philosophy and spiritual meaning for the work of farmers.

What great things have many of the farmer-sowers done! Things like that boyhood neighbor who was so loved and trusted that he was repeatedly elected county treasurer. As he made his official journeys about the county he often carried on the buggy seat a bag from which he would fling alfalfa or sweet clover seed into the hedgerows as he passed. Thus, he hoped, an occasional seed would find a favorable lodging place, take root and multiply, and so demonstrate to the doubting farmers that such soil-building crops could be grown by them.

Another farmer-sower was John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed. A century and more ago he provided the settlers of the Northwest Territory with fruit trees by planting apple seeds in protected forest nooks. A life of devotion was spent in visiting these far-flung plantings to give the seedlings loving care. Fruit-hungry settlers, far from their New England orchards, at first thought him crazy but later rose up to call his name blessed.

In the same spirit is the labor of a young farm lad from Iowa who has lately discovered how to cross the Mexican plant teosinte with corn. From this crossing it seems likely that there will come various new grain and forage plants with which to feed a hungry world.

SOWERS OF TRUTH

Truth-sowers are many teachers and scientists, community builders, preachers and parents. Indeed all

who work and wait for their efforts to develop and grow into fruits of usefulness for mankind are among "those who sow." We think of such a scientist as the late Dr. George F. Warren who caused these words of Whittier to be inscribed over the entrance to the agricultural economics building at the New York State College of Agriculture:

> Never yet share of truth
> Was vainly set in the world's wide fallow;
> After hands shall sow the seed,
> After hands from hill and mead
> Shall reap the harvests yellow.

Warren himself not only set the share of truth going in new, unplowed fields of economic thought but he also scattered many of the seeds.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Among those who sow the truth I think also of those mothers and fathers and teachers who plant deep within the soul of a child seeds of purity, love and wisdom, and wait for them to flower forth into the honorable manhood or womanhood of maturity. I think of community builders such as that young physician who entered a strife-torn rural district and so successfully sowed the seeds of cooperation, understanding and mutual respect that within ten years the community blossomed forth as one unit, with all its people living as one happy family. I think also of Christian community builders like Dr. A. H. Rapking who spent seventeen years sowing the gospel of community living in three hundred fifty West Virginia communities, until now other states are turning there for guidance. I think of Dr. Malcolm Dana who became the first national exponent of the larger parish idea and scattered the knowledge of it across the land. I think of Dr. Ralph Felton who sowed the seeds of cooperative Christian living in the smaller places of New York state and now has been called out to other states and even to the Orient. Truly God has blessed us in such men as these, each of whom has left a deposit of influence even in our own community and church. Perhaps here in the Tobey Larger Parish we too may rightly consider ourselves as worthy to be counted among "those who sow," for we have been pioneering in cooperative religion in the small places, planting and nurturing and waiting in the high faith that God giveth the increase.

WHAT MANNER OF MEN ARE THE SOWERS?

A question we may well ask ourselves is, What are the qualities of character of those who sow?

Outstanding is their foresight—the ability to see into the future and to glimpse there the possibilities of their sowing. Coupled with this is patience to wait for the fruitage of their labors. Mary Meek Atkeson writes about patience in her story of Johnny Appleseed, "The orchardist must know how to wait, for other sowers reap ten times before he gathers his first harvest." Well, the parent, the teacher, the religious leader must often wait far longer still. For he who sows in the soul of a child must wait a generation—or two. Sowers of the truth must also have patience with those who do not understand the meaning of the seed which is being sowed and nurtured—and this is often the hardest kind of patience to possess. Yet how superb is our Master's example of it, an example carried unwaveringly even unto the cross.

A further quality necessary for those who sow is endurance. Just as Johnny Appleseed had endurance to carry him across rivers and floods and through perilous forests, so we need endurance for the sake of our good seed. Truly we must "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Yet how much better to endure hardness as a good sower for him.

"Those who sow" have faith—faith in their seed, in their cause, an enthusiastic faith incapable of being undermined. Conscious of being God's sowers of the seeds of truth, they have a humble faith in themselves as his instruments.

SOWERS OF THE FUTURE

A further question we cannot escape is, Who will be the sowers of truth in the new generation? There are so many causes of strife, injustice and misunderstanding arising among men today. We are troubled by such manifestations on every hand. A recent strike of bean-sorters for a wage of more than nine cents an hour has again revealed the need for better urban-rural understanding and better farmer-labor relations. The noise of violence and strife between races and nations and classes of men and within communities challenges us to redouble our efforts to sow the seeds of reconciliation and peace. Especially from among the youth of today, who will go forth for us as sowers for God? Many rural young people are piddling around as office clerks, car repairmen or hairdressers—all honorable vocations, but work anyone can do—who have all the gifts and graces to make them great sowers of God's truth and justice and healing love.

God needs sowers today! Only a short time ago one of our leaders stated that it seemed to him we have lots of ideas today, but what we need is to put more of them to work. He is right. We do indeed have the good seed, but where are the additional sowers? Never was there such a time as this in which to sow God's truth. For today the souls of men and the social life of humanity are as a freshly torn field awaiting the sower. He who goes forth today as one of "those who sow" and devotes all of himself, without reserve, to scattering the good seed will become a blessing to mankind. Come what will, amidst all the selfishness, injustice and cruel indifference of men that seed will find root and one day flower forth. This high faith is well exhibited in a poem by Dr. William L. Stidger. Let me give you some stanzas from it.

> The seed is in the clod, my friend,
> The sun is in the sky;
> The world may rock with ruthlessness,
> But God is standing by.
>
> The fog has settled down, O world,
> The traveler's trail is dim;
> The night is starless as the tomb
> Along the world's wide rim.

But faith is still alive, alert,
And love is everywhere;
In every broken heart that lifts
Amid its gloom, a prayer!

. . . . .

World-brotherhood is still alive,
Though stricken to the sod;
It waits amid the mire and mud
To hear the shout of God!

. . . . .

The rose shall blossom from the muck
In His good time and day;
The seed is in the clod, O world,
And God shall have his way!

True words of faith and hope are these. All that is missing is an emphasis upon the necessity for someone to put the seed into the clod. We have the seed; we have the soil; best of all, we have God. Who will fill the gap? Who will hear the call and go out as one of "those who sow"? "Behold a sower went forth to sow" and some seed brought forth thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold.

A Fellowship for God and Man

By Thomas R. Davies

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Ephesians 2:22.

THE Epistle to the Ephesians has been called the charter of the church's unity. It presents the ideal of spiritual unity and admonishes Christians to make it real in the world. In our text we have a clear statement regarding the church. We have an answer to three common questions: What is it? How is it? Why is it?

"Ye are builded together" tells us that it is a fellowship; "through the Spirit" tells us of the quality of the fellowship; "for an habitation of God" suggests the purpose of the fellowship. It is under these three headings that I wish to present my message.

THE CHURCH AS A FELLOWSHIP

The desire for fellowship is primitive and powerful. Membership in a tribe was at one time essential for protection. Schopenhauer has given us an amusing parable: "A number of porcupines huddled together on a cold day for warmth but as they began to prick one another with their quills, they were obliged to disperse. However, the cold drove them together again, when the same thing happened. At last, after many turns of huddling and dispersing they discovered that they would be best off by remaining at a little distance from one another. In the same way the need of society drives the human porcupines together, only to be mutually repelled by the many prickly and disagreeable qualities of their natures. The moderate distance which they at last discover to be the only tolerable condition of intercourse is the code of politeness and fine manners, and those who transgress it are roughly told to keep their distance. By this arrangement the mutual need of warmth is only moderately satisfied, but then people do not get pricked."

The human story is the story of the breaking down and building up of human associations; for while people find it difficult to live together in harmony, they find it even more difficult to live apart. Out of the warmth of human contact there has come the ability to speak and write; to appreciate the good, the beautiful and the true; to delve into the realms of philosophy and science; to scale the heights of art and religion. Fellowship may begin as a matter of human necessity but it can become the source of human grandeur.

People may find fellowship on many planes. All manner of pretexts are given for gathering together. Because many people are natives of the Maritime Provinces, a basis is found for a Maritimers Association. Others find a common interest in the novels of Charles Dickens, and this becomes the basis for a Dickensian Fellowship. You can have fellowship among the sons of Satan and also among the sons of God; but the higher the level of the basis for fellowship, the deeper and more permanent that fellowship will be. You remember what happened to the pirate crew in *Treasure Island*. The pirates were companions as they searched for treasure. They sang their rollicking sea songs together; but when the time came for the division of the booty, the companionship ceased. It is the parable of the porcupines again. Each individual in that crew was armed with quills—avarice, bad temper, selfishness, crudeness and such like. The lower the basis for fellowship, the more quills there are and the greater danger of disintegration. The higher the basis for fellowship, the fewer quills there are and the more these few are kept in control.

THE QUALITY OF FELLOWSHIP IN THE CHURCH

The church is a fellowship. It is "the company of those who in the friendship of Jesus Christ are seeking to live lives like his. . . . It is the most wonderful institution in the world. It has lasted longer than any other institution. It has weathered the storms of nearly two thousand years. . . . It has been the home of great men and women: Paul, Augustine, Luther and Wesley. Saints such as Monica, St. Francis, St. Catherine have breathed into it their fragrant breath. Martyrs like Stephen, Polycarp and Hugh Latimer have died for it. Great poets like Dante, Bernard and Charles Wesley have sung about it. Great pioneers like Xavier, David Livingstone and Mary Slessor have offered to it their intrepid spirit." The basis for this fellowship must be on a very high level to have provided for the building together of such a remarkable and lasting association.

Now I am fully aware of the many failings of the churches today. The fellowship is all too often sadly shattered and Christian people agree to worship apart. I was reminded by Lloyd Douglas, at the time of my graduation, that though I had studied all kinds of subjects in the university, my chief task in the active ministry would be to keep the saints from biting one

another. In my work as a minister I have presented the challenge of church membership, and have too often been reminded of church squabbles. However, in spite of the unfaithfulness of its friends and the criticism of its enemies, the church continues. How can we explain this tremendous vitality? Our text suggests the answer. We are told that the church is a fellowship of the Spirit. "Ye also are builded together . . . through the Spirit." What does this mean?

SACRAMENTAL FELLOWSHIP

I can best illustrate what this means by reminding you of a custom that has found its place at the heart of the Christian church. A piece of ordinary bread is placed upon the table. It is divided and distributed to those present with the invitation to "take." There is nothing unusual about this invitation and when we accept it we make no unusual commitment. We are a bundle of desires and crave satisfaction. In taking, we obey a natural impulse. This impulse we share with the beasts. We are then invited to "eat," and there is no hesitation when that word is spoken. Once again we obey an impulse that we have in common with the lower animals. There is a plane where fellowship is based upon taking; there is a plane where fellowship is based upon eating, but the plane upon which the church finds fellowship is higher than these. While the church recognizes the baser nature, it controls the expression of the animal in us. As we "take" and "eat" we are admonished to "remember"—"This do in remembrance of me." The church finds its basis for fellowship, not in taking or in eating but in remembering. It recognizes that man does not live by bread alone. As Studdert-Kennedy puts it,

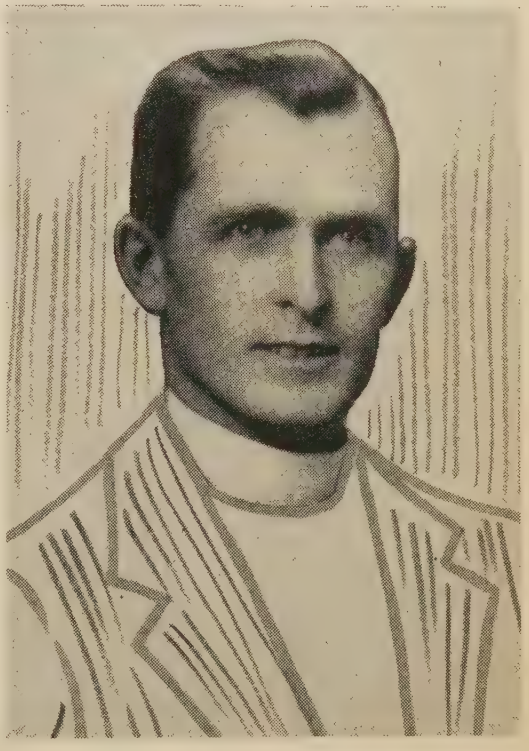
> Not thus by bread alone can man be saved;
> The hunger in his heart is infinite,
> And craves Infinity for Food. . . .
> I dare not give man bread,
> Unless I give him more. He must have God.

In this ceremony which is central in the life of the Christian church, we take and eat, but it is in remembering that we are lifted to the high plane which is the basis of our fellowship.

We must remember that bread is not just bread. In it are wrapped the hopes and fears of innumerable people. The farmer sows the grain and cares for it during the warm months of summer. With great concern he watches the heavens for signs of fair or foul weather, and this concern is never altogether absent until all is safely gathered in. The miller and the baker play their parts in transforming the golden grain into the bread that we need; nor must we forget the merchant who delivers it to our doors. We see then that the lives of farmers, millers, bakers, merchants and a host of others are a part of every piece of bread, and we need bread. Remembering this will prevent us from despising any of these people. In remembering this, the quills of selfishness and self-sufficiency will surely be removed.

A fellowship of the Spirit is a fellowship which recognizes an invisible power behind everything visible —behind man there is an invisible soul—behind the world there is the invisible God. Remembering this will remove the quills of pride and conceit. "When I consider Thy heavens, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man?" The fellowship of the church is based upon the recognition of the invisible God.

It is not sufficient, however, to recognize the presence of the invisible God. We need to *know* him. William Blake made a drawing of a very small boy at the foot of a long ladder stretching from earth to the moon. With hands uplifted, he cries: "I want, I want." He hungers for bread to feed his body, but even more for bread to feed his soul. He looks upward. That picture is an excellent symbol of the church. A Christian congregation is a group of worshiping



THOMAS R. DAVIES

people. The basis for their fellowship is aspiration. It is no wonder that Gothic architecture has been the characteristic form in the construction of Christian churches. If you stand close to such a structure, the form of the very panels in the door invites you to look upward; and as you stand back, you see that the very shape of the door is a like invitation. When you stand far enough away you realize that the whole structure is aspiration written in stone. This too is symbolical of a Christian congregation, the life of which is measured not horizontally but vertically; for it is a fellowship of aspiration. "Ye also are builded together . . . through the Spirit."

Aspiration alone, however, is not sufficient as a basis for a lasting fellowship. There must be some response to the aspiring soul. Let us continue the experience we were having as we gazed at the Gothic cathedral. Our eyes kept moving upward and upward until at last, not inappropriately, they rested upon a

cross. So the worshiping souls in a Christian congregation aspire until at last their eyes rest upon Christ, whose love was symbolized in a cross. In Christ they see one who suffered long and was kind; who was not envious, proud nor conceited; who was thoroughly unselfish and patient; one who bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things and endured all things. They see in Christ one who never faileth, one who is the answer to the deepest longings of the soul of man. As they look upon Christ, they say with one of long ago, "Surely this was a Righteous Man," and they are held by him until at last they cry out as did another of long ago, "My Lord and my God." God is revealed in Christ.

THE PURPOSE OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

The attainment of that harmonious fellowship of which we have spoken is one of the salient purposes of the church. The building of a fellowship of the Spirit is a noble purpose in itself, but it is not the ultimate end. That fellowship of men must become the means to a greater end. Our text tells us that the ultimate goal is "a habitation for God." God not only wants men to live together in harmony but he wants them to dwell with him. The church is to be the home for God in the world, so that through that home he can reach other homes.

What a high privilege this is, and yet what a terrible responsibility! We are God's building, and have the power to keep him out. We can prevent him from living in the world. We can limit God. It is a sobering thought to realize that the only hands God has in the world for certain work are your hands and mine. If our hands don't do it, it remains undone. God wants to dwell in us that he may use our hands. God needs the church that he may have a body of people in whom to dwell and through whom to work.

In his book, *This Transforming Friendship,* Leslie Weatherhead tells of attending mass in a great cathedral. A little child wandered into the aisle. He seemed to be lost and began to cry. "A man next to me rose, gathered the child in his arms and sat down. I can hear his 'There, there' uttered in tones so tender as to make one think very beautiful things of that man.

"Talking of everlasting arms. Why, they were nearly touching me. The man was comforting a little child for God. It would be as true to say that God was comforting a little child through the arms of a man. When I passed out of that church I knew I had been near to God—nearer than the priest; for if God can come near to man in a wafer, he can come even nearer in the love of a big-hearted man."

The Church of Christ is his sacred body. It is Christ made visible in society. It is a fellowship, and an abiding fellowship, because it is of the Spirit. Its ultimate purpose is that God might have an abiding place in the world through which he might win the world to himself so that the world might become the church. If you are of this fellowship, recognize your high privilege. If not, do not delay longer. You need the church and the church needs you if God's purpose is to be fulfilled.

A Divided Church in the Rural Areas

By Holmes Rolston

That they all may be one. John 17:21.

I AM the pastor of a country church in a rural section of Virginia. Less than a mile away stands a Methodist church. The two institutions serve the same community. Our church depends in part for its support on a small endowment. Even with this help, the balancing of its limited budget has proved difficult. The Methodist church is not able fully to support its work. For many years the conference has been forced to put mission money into its support. In addition, the pastor of this church has to serve other fields in widely scattered communities. Every Sunday he must drive fifty miles and preach three or four times.

Ten miles from our church is a small village with two Protestant churches, both supported in part by mission funds. The town is in an old and settled community with a fine cultural background. The community as a whole is in no sense a missionary community, but both denominations have poured home mission money into it for twenty years.

I have a friend who lives in a small town in another state. The town has no resident pastor. There are four churches, each holding a religious service once a month. This constitutes the total religious program for the community, and the religious life of the town is at a low ebb.

AN INTOLERABLE SITUATION

Illustrations could be multiplied indefinitely. Those which have been given are sufficient to compel us to realize how heavy is the cost to small town and rural communities of our current Protestant denominationalism. In times of prosperity the financial burden did not always become acute, but during the past ten years the situation has become increasingly intolerable. Communities that could formerly easily support one church are breaking under the strain of trying to support two or three churches. Most of these churches are forced to use all their financial strength for self-preservation. For this reason they are able to do little toward the far-flung work of the Kingdom of God. We have therefore a sad spectacle: many of our best communities are spending all their substance on themselves, giving practically nothing in support of the world mission of Christianity. To grasp the present situation fully we must do more than estimate the money lost to missions through denominationalism. We must remember that many of these churches are kept alive by home mission money.

In my own denomination, half the churches listed in the minutes of the General Assembly receive aid from outside sources. The bulk of the money raised for home missions in our stronger churches goes for sustentation work, and the money that remains for aggressive mission work in underprivileged communities is a limited sum indeed. It would be interesting to know

the number of churches receiving support through our home mission agencies that are located in communities which ought to be able to support their religious work without outside help. The diversion of funds of churches from needy mission fields to this type of sustentation work is a scandal in Protestantism. Yet it is to be found everywhere.

THE PLIGHT OF THE RURAL MINISTER

Much of the burden is borne by the rural minister, who usually receives a very inadequate salary. The root cause of this inadequacy does not lie in the indifference or the poverty of the people to whom he ministers, but in the scandal of a divided church. But

HOLMES ROLSTON

if the minister bears a heavy share of the financial burden forced on our rural churches because of their denominational divisions, he also pays a heavy price in the unsatisfactory nature of the task to which he is called. No man can have a satisfactory pastorate if he is forced to serve small groups in widely scattered communities. I have a deep sympathy for the minister who must wear himself out preaching three or four times every Sunday in communities that may be ten to twenty miles apart and to congregations that usually number from thirty to fifty.

The rural life is a satisfying life and where men are able to serve strong rural churches truly centering their communities, rural pastorates are apt to be permanent. But men who serve little struggling churches in situations that are hopelessly competitive are apt to tire of it all and to seek other fields in which they can more adequately exercise their powers.

But the heaviest burden of all is borne by the people themselves. And this burden is not a financial one. Ten miles from our church is one of the largest rural churches in my denomination. During the whole of its history it has had undisputed command of a rich rural territory extending in every direction from five to ten miles. This church has a membership of more than seven hundred people. It has a plant that is equal in equipment to that of most city churches of the same size. It puts on a well rounded program that centers the whole life of the community. In my own community we could have as large a membership and could put on as full a program if we were all united in one church. But we are not a fair illustration of the workings of this system because our church is an independent church with a resident, full-time pastor and a membership of more than three hundred and fifty. To understand the full consequences of this system in many communities we must visualize little churches, with inadequate plants, without a resident pastor, and with a program that is utterly inadequate to meet the needs of boys and girls who are being educated in the centralized high schools. This is the divided church that is far too well known in most rural areas.

THE BASIS OF DENOMINATIONAL DIVISIONS

I would have more sympathy with the present situation if by perpetuating these divisions we were testifying, within the various communities, to vital truths that might be otherwise overlooked. But consider my own community. I have given the major interest of my life to the study of theology. I believe that I have an accurate understanding of the doctrinal differences that separate the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. I know also the differences in tradition and in worship. But I am convinced that in the minds of most of the people who live within my community there is no clear grasp of these differences. They are not bearing the burden of division in order to witness to truth that is vital to them.

It is often urged that the division of rural communities into various churches is essentially a class division. It is true that in many cases denominational divisions have had their real origin in the social strata. The church is a fellowship and people who do not feel comfortable together find it difficult to work together in the same church. But while there is truth in this contention, its importance has often been overestimated. The churches in a community may witness to class divisions that existed fifty or a hundred years ago. Today those barriers have been largely broken down and the people are ready to unite in a church that centers in the community, but the churches, instead of profiting by the new situation, cling to formulas that have little meaning for the present-day order.

But even where class divisions still obtain, is there not something very deadly in the ease with which Protestantism accepts them? Is it not of the essence of the church of Christ that she should attempt to build in every community a fellowship which bridges the barriers of class? The church is called upon to transcend class divisions, not to be the last bulwark of their perpetuation. Much of the present procedure of the

Protestant churches is a denial of the very nature of the church as conceived in the New Testament.

TOWARD A SOLUTION

It is very easy to present a problem. It is much more difficult to suggest a satisfactory solution of it. But a few remarks growing out of some years' experience may be appropriate here.

In the first place, I feel that all the churches should be keenly aware of the problem with which we are wrestling and that they should actively concern themselves with its solution. The sharpest judgment on the Protestant churches is not that this problem exists, but that most of the churches show so little concern about it. In this matter as in others the sight of the chasm that lies between things as they are and things as they ought to be should rouse us out of our complacent ease and lead us to wrestle with the problem. It would be a great pity if the Protestant churches refused to face it until they were forced to do so by some great anti-Christian movement such as those of present-day Germany and Russia. We need to act under the compulsion of mind and heart of our Master who has promised to bring together the sheep of various folds in order that they may become one fold under one shepherd.

In the second place, let us realize that any union that is worth while must be based on a common grasp of the full truth that is in Jesus Christ. A union that comes about on the basis of a minimum of belief is certain of failure. But here also we may find that unconsciously we have come nearer together, so that our present divisions do not witness to doctrines that are vital. The Baptist Church, for example, has consistently stood for the principle that the church should be composed of mature believers with a vital experience of religion. If we examine conditions in some European countries where church membership is practically identical with population, we can see the importance of this testimony. But in America the insight of the Baptists has spread to other communions, until today there is very little difference on this point between Presbyterian and Baptist churches. In the same way the Episcopal Church has consistently stood for richness of worship, and the other churches have learned from her.

DIFFERENCES NO LONGER VITAL

The real tragedy comes when we insist on perpetuating differences that were once vital but have no meaning at present. The history of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland is instructive. Chalmers and his followers split that church as a protest against lay patronage and as a vital testimony to the spiritual freedom of the church. But when the point for which the Free Church had stood was won within the Church of Scotland, the Free Church was ready to return to the mother church.

In the third place, I do not believe that very much can be done toward the solution of this problem by the community church, if the community church be defined as a union within the community which is not recognized by the denominations concerned. The fatal defect of this type of community church is that it creates a new denomination and cuts its members off from any vital relation to the body of Christ outside the community.

SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM

In the fourth place, we shall never solve this problem until we learn to put the interests of the Kingdom of God as a whole above the seeming interests of our own particular denomination. In many cases, home mission money is being used to keep alive churches that really ought to die. When a community that cannot support more than one church must support two churches, it may be to the advantage of the Kingdom of God for one church to withdraw. (This advice is based of course on the assumption that neither church by its continued existence within the community testifies to a vital religious principle.) The smaller church in all probability is not able to put on an effective program, but by its continued existence it so weakens the other church that neither is able to grapple adequately with the situation. I am aware that I am stating a principle that might call in question the right of many of our Presbyterian churches to exist, but I believe the principle is sound. We should put the larger interests of the whole church of Christ above the interests of our own denomination. Our final concern must always be with the effect of our testimony on the Kingdom of God.

There are times when a church best serves the cause of Christ by saying no to union. If we were in Germany today we should of course feel that the Confessional churches were right in leaving an institution that permitted the state to control her witness to the Christian faith. For only by such a course is it possible for men to refuse to compromise on a vital point. But in America today the perpetuation of our senseless system of denominational divisions is not a testimony to vital truth. It is a testimony to our lethargy and our stupidity. If we are willing to face the deep problems of a divided church in our rural areas with wills that are completely surrendered to the purpose of God in Jesus Christ, we shall find that the living Christ is ready to lead us on toward the solution.

The Editor wishes to thank Dr. Mark Rich, field representative of the Department of Town and Country Work of the American Baptist Home Mission Society for his invaluable help in selecting the sermons which make up this Rural Church Number of The Christian Century Pulpit.

A Pastoral Prayer

By G. Shubert Frye

O THOU who art the spirit of calm, alive in all living things, who art to be found by those whose hearts are pure; we wait silently in Thy presence to hear Thy voice and to bring unto Thee our thanks for all Thy works of goodness and truth. For open spaces fringed with green leaves and carpeted by the softness of the grass where the soul flies free into the vastness of wonder, we give Thee our thankful praise. For green pastures and dense wood, for running streams and quiet pools, for the fragile beauty of spring blossoms, for the startled retreat of timid wild creatures, we give Thee our thankful praise. For the promise of the creative earth at seedtime and its fulfillment at harvest, for the spirit of hope and expectancy in the hearts of men, for the comradeship of those who work in the soil, we give Thee our thankful praise.

We pray unto Thee, O God, for our brothers throughout the world and for ourselves, that we may be lifted out of the sordidness and confusion which engulfs so much of mankind. May the sunlight of Thy love heal us of our doubt and unbelief and may the soft rains of Thy patience drench our hardness of heart that we may become good ground for Thy seed of truth. Do Thou strengthen our faith and transform our vision that we may go forth into the light of day to work, and into the darkness of night to rest, for the nurturing of Thy kingdom in the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Cruelty to Words

By Herbert L. Willett

THERE ought to be a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Words. There are certain terms in the language which are suited to rough usage, and are the natural barbarians of the common speech. But when respectable and dignified parts of speech are mauled and manhandled it is cause for public protest.

There is that perfectly respectable word "contact," which as a noun has many honorable uses. But when it is beaten up and dragged out into employment as a verb, and you hear illiterate and negligent people talk about "contacting" others, or exclaiming "I will contact him," it gives you that venerable and weary feeling which only the most philistine language can inspire. There are many such benighted terms which give us acute queasiness, but I have the conviction that none of them is more entitled to aversion than this disreputable participle, "contacting."

There is another expression which is one of the most frequently heard and the most meaningless in the vocabulary. It is the word "happen." Rightly employed it has an effective significance. There is in it a teasing quality of chance, surprise, adventure. But it rarely enjoys that privilege. You hear somebody say "I happened to be in England last summer," which implies a casual, chancy, frequent experience, as if with a slight hint of boredom you were to add, "O, I am there every few months." It would of course be quite proper for you to say, "I happened to fall out of an airplane," for that carries with it no suggestion of deliberate purpose. Or you might say, with Dickens: "Walking down Fleet Street, I chanced to glance in a shop window." That would be wholly proper, for there was no intention in the act. But when one says, "I happened to be in Washington at the inauguration," or "I happened to spend the winter in California," or "I happened to purchase a new suit last week," there is a straining of the casual and customary in the remark.

I was once near the line of march of a military parade, and as the troops were passing a man pushed his way through the crowd and elbowed aside a young officer watching the show. Somewhat nettled at the shove he turned and said, "Who do you think you are, anyway?" to which the other replied, "I happen to be the secretary of war." And the next week a New York paper had this line, "That is the best explanation we have heard of the matter."

Safe Preaching

A CERTAIN church in one of our border Southern states had a minister who felt that the church should consider social problems. One Sunday he delivered an able sermon on the evil of the liquor traffic. After the service, a deacon took him to one side and said: "That was a fine sermon, but if I were you, I wouldn't say anything about the liquor business, for one of our heaviest contributors is the wife of a liquor dealer." The minister, not desirous of endangering the finances of the church, agreed, and the next Sunday spoke of the evils of gambling. After this sermon the president of the board took him aside and said: "You are treading on thin ice; one of our heaviest contributors is the wife of a professional gambler." The next Sunday the minister felt he had a safe subject. He spoke against war and the racket wherein munition manufacturers make profits out of the life blood of the soldiers. After that sermon, the church clerk took him to one side and said: "I am not trying to tell you what to preach, but one of our leading members is a heavy stockholder in a munition factory, and such sermons as this morning's will get you into trouble."

The minister asked, "What can I preach about?" "Well," said the clerk, "we are a peculiar people, we pay you, and we don't pay you to say things we don't like. But I think that I have a safe subject for you; there's not a Japanese in the community, you might give Japan hell."

Lansing Church Bulletin.

The Rural Minister's Problems

By Mark Rich

"IT IS my seasoned conviction," writes Dr. Robert Greenville Armstrong, "that the best work that has been done, is being done and will be done, is to be found in the rural or small village church." That is a high tribute to rural ministers. There are many pastors of rural churches who serve with the devotion and zeal of John Frederic Oberlin or Harlow S. Mills. Like these saints of the country, all pastors who serve effectively do so by overcoming obstacles. It is the purpose of this article to consider some problems of the rural minister and to indicate solutions.

• *A Feeling of Inferiority*

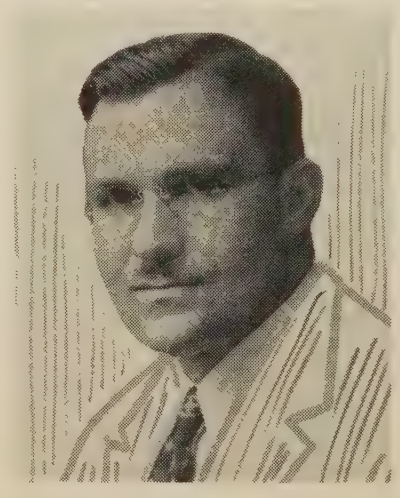
A problem faced by most rural ministers is a haunting feeling of inferiority. Consider the plight of the town and country minister. He may be a graduate from a school which aims to train leaders for the upper 20 per cent of the churches. Members of his seminary class may have agreed that no one can afford to take a minimum salary higher than most country churches pay. His denominational executive may have the attitude expressed in the familiar words, "He is fit only to be a pastor of a small country church." In his congregation there may be many who think of the city charge as a place of superior opportunity, and innocently taunt their pastor by saying, "Most of our pastors have gone to large city churches." A rural minister must live with these attitudes which pull down his morale. He thinks highly of his position, but many others call it second-rate. For them the rural pastorate is not the place for significant success. It is a training ground for young ministers unfortunate enough not to be called to higher places, and for elderly pastors it provides a comfortable sunset ministry.

Now, such an attitude creates serious problems for the rural pastor. He is quite human; he appreciates recognition; he wants to do a commendable work. The seriousness of this problem is not understood except by those who love rural work in which they are engaged, but whose classmates, superiors and friends do not see the importance of it.

• *Limited Income and Equipment*

A second problem is his lack of physical equipment and money income. Our whole economy is on a cash basis. The rural minister works where cash is more precious than present. O. E. Baker estimates that the 21 per cent of our population which is agricultural receives but 9 per cent of the national income. Rural pastors may not know those figures but they feel the results.

A recent county survey shows startling facts concerning salaries of town and country ministers. The average annual salary for 26 pastors was $829. Of these, five received an average annual salary of $405, eleven received $738 and ten received an annual average of $1,140. In contrast, the average annual salary of three ministers in a town of 3,000 population was $2,316. Some denominations have made notable strides in correcting this situation, but still the rank and file of rural ministers are sorely underpaid.



Mark Rich

• *A High-Cost Calling*

This condition is more serious than it at first seems, because the rural minister must take many of the costs of operation out of his salary. No man can drive an automobile for much less than three cents a mile, yet a country minister is dependent upon this money-eating vehicle. Books, mimeograph and supplies, stationery and typewriter (if there be one) are supplied by the minister.

The low salary and high costs work some hardships on the family. The feminine members, to whom clothes and beauty are precious, suffer most. Doctor's bills, dentist's bills, insurance, a new dining room table—how are these bills to be paid? As for that trip to California, New York, or to Europe—never, of course!

The low income of farmers reflects itself in the parsonages. The writer clearly remembers one parsonage in which water spilled on the kitchen floor froze on cold winter days. A young man making a rural church survey installed a heater in his automobile to warm up between stops in country parsonages. "If rural ministers could only live in comfortable homes," reports a well known national leader, "they would be much more likely to be satisfied to work in the country."

• *Doors Closed to Rural Pastors*

A third problem is that of closed doors. To the rural minister many doors are practically closed—closed not by law of state or church, but by custom and tradition. What are some of the doors through which a rural minister seldom passes?

He can hardly ever be a board member of one of his national societies. To be more exact, in one denomination, among the 129 board members of 5 national societies, 3 live in towns under 2,500 population; the 126 live in cities. This, in a denomination in which 60 per cent of the churches and more than 30 per cent of the membership are rural. Nor can a rural minister speak from a national church platform, and his voice is seldom raised in his state conference or convention. Most rural ministers do not attend national gatherings. Although rural churches are in the vanguard of the movement toward interchurch cooperation, country preachers were hardly represented at the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences.

This is a disastrous condition. Professor Carl Becker gives the account of the passing of the Habeas Corpus Act in England when the tellers, in jest, counted one fat lord as ten. The act was passed by that margin. Urban churches are counted for more than they represent in the total life of the church. They are important and it is not to be implied that they or any one group is responsible for this inequitable distribution of responsibility. Yet, the fact that large doors are closed to country ministers gives rise to an acute problem.

• *Does the Minister Belong?*

The country minister need not, however, think it futile to endeavor to cope with these problems. They

can be solved. First, let a pastor find himself. Does he belong in the country? Let him make every possible effort to adjust himself to his situation.

A first remedy is practical. Country pastorates will not provide large salaries, even when interchurch cooperation and plans for salary "equitization" have been made effective. To be specific, the minister's salary will not be as large as that of the school principal or of the county agricultural agent.

• *Overcoming the Handicap*

If the minister is to live more abundantly he must adopt ways of living which will make his money go farther. A recent writer declares that in New York city, by careful expenditures, he could live as well on a $3,000 salary as others do on $10,000. A country minister must learn how to stretch dollars and cents. A garden and chickens may make a sizable addition to his salary. Canning meat makes another saving. Pastors in some of the western states have an abundant meat supply with no cash outlay except for hunting license and cartridges. Cooperative buying may insure quality produce for a smaller expenditure. Cracked wheat from the mill at a cost of two cents a pound is more tasty than certain prepared cereals at 20 cents a pound. All such devices of careful management, by which the rural minister's cash income is stretched, will add to his efficiency as a worker.

Personal loan companies charge as much as 36 per cent interest for loans, and ordinary time payment plans are exorbitant. A rural minister should avoid such costs. Some automobiles use less gas than others and cost less to license and repair. A judicial use of this amazing but costly instrument of transportation may save many dollars. Some ministers ride a bicycle, and others find walking good for health, pocket book and parish work. Discerning purchase of furniture at auctions often brings to the home, at small cost, articles of better quality than can be purchased new at large cost. There are reliable information services for consumers which will help mightily in this matter of canny and conservative buying.

• *Books and the Minister*

Then as to books. Ministers in North Dakota formed a reading circle and for the price of one and postage they read ten. Theological schools and state libraries are improving their book lending services which are available to all.

Nor need rural ministers miss the fellowship and inspiration of conferences. In some places, they set up their own on a low cost plan. Denominations are giving scholarship assistance to help town and country ministers attend summer schools. Material well-being does not always consist in the total salary received or in the number of figures on the price tag of articles purchased.

• *Importance of the Rural Ministry*

Some adjustments, like some problems, are psychological. By believing greatly in his work, a country minister can overcome many problems, particularly the feeling of inferiority. There are many reasons why the rural minister should have an elevated estimate of his station. He can discover that rural life is basic to civilization. The words of Bryce are often quoted: "When the arena in the city became more important than the cornfield in the country, Rome fell." Jefferson later wrote: "I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries as long as they are chiefly agricultural." According to these words rural life is fundamental to national welfare, and Christian rural life to the spiritual well-being of the nation.

The rural minister should know the high esteem in which some hold the country church. Dr. J. S. Armentrout recently said: "It seems to me that if any group has the opportunity to become a fellowship of persons growing together toward Christlikeness in all aspects of life, it is the rural and village church." That is the supreme function of the church, to help people grow together in Christlikeness, and the country church is conducive to that!

The country minister will also become elevated in spirit as he considers the statement of the seminary executive: "They [seminaries] do not realize that the time is coming when the country can offer, perhaps more than the city, a career for the Kingdom of God." Several years ago, Bishop O'Hara of the Catholic Church said that if that church wanted to be strong in America in coming generations it would have to strengthen itself in the country. The country church has potentialities like that!

• *The Country Church Movement*

Let a rural pastor revive his spirit by thinking of the country church movement. In this movement, a quarter of a century old, the country church has become one of the most studied religious institutions in America. Books and pamphlets produced make a sizable library. Regional, national and international organizations have sprung up. In New England, the Town and Country Church Commission has sponsored a wide program of studies, conferences and church cooperation which with the Interseminary Commission for the training of the rural ministry has made that section a pioneer field in rural church methods. In New York state the Rural Institute is carrying on a wide extension service to country people by radio, pamphlets, survey, church adjustment and conferences. The International Christian Rural Fellowship, through its service of bulletins and conferences and its state branches, is performing a yeoman service, and the formation of the Agricultural Missions Foundation and the inauguration of Rural Life Sunday are having a world-wide influence.

• *Colleges and Rural Churches*

Rural church days with large attendance are held at agricultural colleges. These state colleges and theological seminaries are increasingly cooperating in establishing summer schools for town and country ministers, and for rural missionaries. Thirty-six such schools are being promoted during this year. National, regional and local conferences on the rural church have been held, and numerous mimeographed news sheets, pamphlets and rural church columns have appeared.

Important advances have been made in rural church programs. In one county, since 1925, vacation schools and weekday schools in religious education have been introduced and widely established, five federated churches and four larger parishes have been formed, two regional men's fellowships established, unified services introduced in several churches, rural church choirs vested, leadership training made available, and summer camps and other innovations in program introduced. A new day has arrived for rural churches in that county, and when viewed in its total aspect, recent years have been tremendous days for the rural church—days with the sun of new hope bursting over the horizon of rural church decay.

• *Toward a Creative Ministry*

If only a rural minister will take time to consider that he is engaged in an area of American life of utmost importance to the total of American culture, an area in which great and significant developments are taking place, he will come to a new appreciation of the importance of his station. This will do much to banish his sense of inferiority.

For most of us who love the country it can offer a magnificent field of service. But a pastor and his family must love simplicity and achieve a degree of self-help. By believing greatly in their work and by adapting themselves to the country way of living, devoted men may enter a rich and creative ministry and find happiness.

WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE

Rev. RAY F. MAGNUSON *is in the tenth year* of his ministry and is now pastor of the Methodist Church, Waverly, Neb. In addition to his work at this church he is senior pastor of the Larger Parish which includes five near-by churches. His later education was received at South Dakota State College and at the University of Nebraska's college of agriculture. He was trained for agricultural extension work but upon the advice of friends entered the ministry, his first pastorate being a two-point charge near Lincoln.

Having received a B.S. in agriculture at Rutgers University and a B.D. at Crozer Seminary, Rev. GEORGE E. JAQUES became pastor of the Federated Church of Bolton, Mass. Last year he became director of the Hilda L. Ives Larger Parish at Lyndon Center, Vt. Mr. Jaques is a life member of the New England Town and Country Church Commission and a member of its board of directors.

Rev. THOMAS R. DAVIES *was awarded* B.A. and M.A. degrees by McGill University, Montreal. He received his theological training at United Theological College in Montreal, where he was given a B.D. degree in 1930. He has held pastorates in Ponoka, Alta., and at Stettler where he is located at present. He is serving his sixth term as chairman of presbytery and has served on mission committees of the Alberta Conference of the United Church of Canada.

Rev. FRANK P. FLETCHER *has spent 26* years in three pastorates: Sunapee, Lebanon and Littleton, all in New Hampshire. He is in his eleventh year at Littleton. Mr. Fletcher was awarded A.B. and M.A. degrees by Wesleyan University and in 1912 completed his divinity work at Boston University School of Theology, receiving the S.T.B. degree. He has written two books: *The Strength of the Hills* and *My Out-of-Doors.*

Since last year RALPH L. WILLIAMSON has served as representative of the Rural Institute for Religious Workers, Barnes Hall, Ithaca, N. Y. and director of rural work for the New York State Council of Churches. He is also pursuing special studies at Cornell University. Mr. Williamson received a B.S. degree in dairy husbandry at Iowa State College and an S.T.B. at Boston University. From 1930 to 1938 he was chairman of the B. F. Tobey Larger Parish in New York.

Rev. HOLMES ROLSTON *has ministered* at the Bethesda Presbyterian Church, Rockbridge Baths, Va., for the past ten years. He is a graduate of Washington and Lee University and received B.D. and Th.D. degrees from Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va. He also studied at the University of Edinburgh. In 1933 he published a book entitled *A Conservative Looks to Barth and Brunner.*

Rev. LEROY P. BURNEY'S *only pastorate* has been Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, N. C., where he has ministered for ten years. A graduate of Davidson College, he received an A.B. *"Cum Laude"* from Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta. For three years he was dean of boys at the Martha Berry Schools. Mr. Burney has been special lecturer on the rural church and religious education at the University of Virginia, Hampton Institute, Duke University and other schools.

Rev. G. SHUBERT FRYE *is minister of* the Presbyterian Church, King Ferry, N. Y.

Rev. MARK RICH *is field representative* of the department of town and country work of the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

TITLES AND TEXTS

What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

EDWARD D. HAMNER, Rural Christian Churches, Oakwood, Texas. "The Highways and Hedges." Luke 14:23—"Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled."

JAMES D. WYKER, Federated, North Jackson, O. "Ethics of the Land." Lev. 23:23—"The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine, and ye are only strangers and sojourners with me."

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

. . . . . .
Title of Sermon

. . . . . .
Text used (write out the text)

. . . . . .
Name of minister

. . . . . .
Name of church

. . . . . .
Address

C. D. MAYHEW, Baptist, Sheboygan Falls, Wis. "Jesus, a Country Preacher." Mark 1:38—"Let us go away, he answered, to the neighboring country towns, that I may preach there too; because for that purpose I came forth."

BARCLAY WALTHALL, New Providence Presbyterian, Raphine, Va. "The Profit of the Earth." Eccl. 5:9—"The profit of the earth is for all; even the king is served by the field."

LELAND W. MANN, Congregational, Mendon, Ill. "The Earth is the Lord's." Psalm 24:1—"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

R. W. ARMSTRONG, Merrickville, Ont. "A Significant Acquaintance." John 17:3—"This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

V. E. BUSLER, Green St. Methodist, Piqua, O. "Enlarging Our Thankful Borders." Eph. 5:20—"Giving thanks always for all things unto God."

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

TOO much cannot be made of the testimony borne by the Southern Baptist convention at Oklahoma City on the increasingly crucial issue of church and state. The strong resolution which was passed (and will probably be passed by the Northern Baptists in their convention at Los Angeles before this note is in print) gives a true lead to the mind of the whole of American Protestantism. Three points stand out in the Baptist protest: (1) Against the church transferring to the federal government the pensioning of its ministers and employes; (2) against the appropriation of public funds for the support of sectarian schools, and (3) against the establishing of diplomatic relations with any ecclesiastical body—meaning, of course, the Vatican. The Southern convention also protested against the use of a detachment of soldiers of the American army in the funeral cortege of Cardinal Hayes in New York, the official representation of Ambassador Kennedy at the recent coronation of the new pope, and the official reception accorded Cardinal Mundelein by the American ambassador to Italy on the occasion of the former's visit a year or so ago to the holy see. American opinion is becoming all too complacent in this matter. The problem of the relation of church and state is one of the most crucial in American life. It cannot be resolved in terms of "rights," or by political pressure alone. A free church can be maintained in this country only by sensitive vigilance against Catholic encroachments on one hand, and by a policy of absolute renunciation and refusal of every form of subsidy and patronage—in my judgment, this should include renunciation of tax exemption—by Protestant churches.

The Witness of the Southern Baptists

The Book of the Month

ESCHATOLOGY AND ETHICS IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS, *by Amos N. Wilder. Harpers, $2.50.*

HERE I come again bringing a book on the New Testament! I find it impossible, when a new book of significance in this field appears, to select any other for this monthly recommendation. I have not yet finished reading Dr. Wilder's book—am about half way through and have peeped at the final pages!—but I have no hesitancy in saying that this work should be in every Christian student's hands. We have been passing through rapid changes in our thought since Harnack's day when Jesus as a moral teacher was "liberated" from the legalism and the Jewish apocalypticism in which he had been traditionally interpreted. Then Schweitzer shocked us with his reversal of the liberal view, throwing us back into eschatology as the essential framework within which to interpret Jesus' teaching, and leaving us only an interim ethic. Dr. Wilder gives us an orientation in the scholarship of this field, and he sets forth the figure of Jesus in the actual situation in which he lived and taught. The critical result of Dr. Wilder's work is to relieve the constraint under which many students labor in their appeal to and use of the ethical teaching of Jesus. The eschatology of Jesus' times, whose atmosphere Jesus himself breathed, does not discount the permanent ethical authority of the Master.

A Thought for the Month

AS I see the life and ministry of Jesus, he was plainly carrying on two parallel lines of activity simultaneously. One was his public ministry addressed to Israel as a whole. The other was his intimate ministry which was concerned with the forming of his selected disciples into an organic community. The line of his public ministry led to failure and death. The line of his intimate ministry led straight to his resurrection. This double activity of Jesus is usually stated as an earlier and a later activity; he began as a prophetic preacher addressing himself to his people, and when irresistible opposition developed, he narrowed his labors to the intimate group which he had gathered about him. In contrast to this view, I see these two activities as running parallel. From the beginning of his public ministry he was engaged in moulding the twelve into a corporate unity. He was training them not so much to do what he was doing, but to be the true Israel. God had revealed himself in Israel's history, but the divine revelation was being choked by racial and nationalistic fanaticism and pride. Jesus did not share these particularistic illusions of his people, and while he was defying them with one hand he was fashioning a new community with the other. This new community was to be the residuary legatee, so to speak, of the revelation which God had given to racial Israel. All Jesus' teachings were designed to knit into solidarity the little flock to whom God would give the kingdom which Israel was rejecting. The kingdom was already here—in the possession of Israel—but they would not see it. But the secret of it was revealed in the solidarity of the new community with Jesus as its center and head. All this comes out at the end when, in the Upper Room, on the night of his betrayal, he expresses as his supreme concern his solicitude for their organic unity with himself and with the Father. For the public the death on the cross was the end. But for the "little flock" it opened on the farther side into the glorious light of the resurrection.

Jesus' Two Ministries

Charles Clayton Morrison

'A Homiletical Library of the Richest Value'

LEWIS H. CHRISMAN is Professor of English Literature at the West Virginia Wesleyan College, as well as a teacher of preachers and maker of sermons. He has been a special lecturer at Drew Theological Seminary, Garrett Biblical Institute, West Virginia University and other schools. Among his published books are *The Message of the American Pulpit, The English of the Pulpit* and *Ten-Minute Sermons.*

Professor Chrisman has for years been a reader of The Christian Century Pulpit. He writes:

> "I have just been going through the volumes of The Christian Century Pulpit, and I cannot let pass this opportunity of telling you how much I value it. There is no publication which comes to my desk which I open with more of a thrill of anticipation. It has never been better than it has been during the past six months. I have all of the numbers from the beginning and there is nothing I enjoy more than spending an evening with the back numbers. The files constitute a homiletical library of the richest value."

Other Appreciations of The Christian Century Pulpit

I have been an enthusiastic reader of the Pulpit from the first issue and find it extremely stimulating. I usually begin to read it in Chinese fashion—first, "A Thought for the Month," then "Titles and Texts," and then the sermons.

W. Nelson Winter,
Calvary Evangelical Church,
Baltimore, Md.

The Pulpit is a real inspiration to me. I have been helped greatly in my own preaching by fellowshiping with those who preach through its pages.

Roland C. Marriott,
First Congregational Church,
Ashfield, Mass.

I continually find much of profit in the pages of the Pulpit.

William H. Boddy,
Westminster Presbyterian Church,
Minneapolis, Minn.

I welcome the Pulpit to my desk and want to thank you for the contribution you are making to busy pastors.

A. D. Stauffacher,
Claremont Church,
Claremont, Cal.

Permit me to express my sincere gratitude for the Pulpit. It has proved a source of inspiration, challenge and stimulation in my ministry.

Vaclav Kejr,
Bohemian Evangelical Church,
Dankovice, Czechoslovakia.

I have been greatly interested in your section, "Titles and Texts." The subjects and texts presented are thought-provoking.

W. Oliver Harrison,
First Christian Church,
Pecos, Tex.

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